Year	Rs. (Crores)
1995-96 (Revised Estimates)	424.62
1994-95	351.81
1993-94	207.09

Postal Operations are largely manpower oriented and approximately 82% of the Total Expenditure of the Department of Post is on salary and wages of the employees. Moreover, the tariff fixed for most of the services, as also agency fee for agency functions, are mostly far less than the cost of operation of these services and this results in low realisation of revenue from these services. It is also relevant to mention that the Department's policy of extending postal facilities in the rural area through opening of new Post Offices includes a substantial element of subsidy.

Steady rise in the cos' anpower and other inputs for Postal Services and non-revision or insufficient revision of rates of many of the services for a number of years contribute to the deficit of the Department.

Revision of Postal Tariff is a part of the Annual Budgetary Exercise, which is done keeping in view the cost of operation and other relevant factors. Efforts are also continuously made by the Government to restrict the department's expenditure through various measures for economy including optimal use of resources and simplification of procedures.

In the Budget speech in Parliament in July, 1996, the Hon'ble Finance Minister has proposed an increase in the rates of printed Post Card from 60 paise to Re. 1/-, registration fee from Rs. 6/- to Rs. 8/-, and introduction of a new service, called Competition Post Card with the tariff of Rs. 2/- each. The Competition Post Card is to be used for responding to any competition organised on or through television, radio, newspaper, magazine or any other media. The additional revenue realisation on account of the proposed revision of tariff is expected to be Rs. 76.00 Crores in a full financial year.

[Translation]

Linkage of Buddhist Tourist places by Air Services

*572. KUMARI UMA BHARATI : Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state :

(a) whether India and Nepal have decided to formulate a scheme to link their Buddhist tourist places by air services; and

(b) if so, the details thereof ?

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION AND MINISTER OF INFORMATION AND BROADCASTING (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM) : (a) No, Sir.

(b) Does not arise.

[English]

Shortage of Essential Commodities

*573. SHRI ANAND RATNA MAURYA : Will the Minister of FOOD be pleased to state :

(a) whether there has been an acute shortage of essential commodities in the rural and backward areas of various States during the last one year or so;

(b) if so, the details of the essential commodities supplied to each State, item-wise; and

(c) the per quintal subsidy given by the Government on foodgrains in the backward and tribal areas of the country, commodity-wise ?

THE MINISTER OF FOOD AND MINISTER OF CIVIL SUPPLIES, CONSUMER AFFAIRS AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (SHRI DEVENDRA PRASAD YADAV) : (a) No, Sir, Presently, 1775 blocks in the country have been covered under the Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS). The offtake of foodgrains in the RPDS areas went up from 3.9 million tonnes in 1994-95 to 4.3 million tonnes in 1995-96.

(b) *I. Wheat and Rice*

Only sporadic shortages of wheat and rice in a few isolated pockets for short period were reported due to lack of adequate infrastructure, dislocation due to natural calamities, problems of law and order and movement constraints. Such occasional shortages were tackled by resorting to intra-state and inter-depot movement on priority basis. A statement-I showing statewise offtake of wheat and rice for Revamped Public Distribution System (RPDS) during 1995-96 is enclosed.

II. Sugar

With a record production of 163.11 lakh tonnes (upto 15.8.1996) during 1995-96 sugar season, the overall availability of sugar in the market has improved. The levy sugar quota to all States/UTs p.m. works out to about 3.69 lakh tonnes. In addition, the Government also releases about 1 lakh tonnes of sugar p.a. as festival quota to various States/UTs in the month of their choice. The festival quota has been doubled for the calender year 1996, keeping in view the comfortable level of sugar production during the season 1995-96. A Statement-II showing the statewise monthly quota of levy sugar is enclosed.

III. Edible Oil

No report of any shortage of edible oil has been received from anywhere during the last one year. A